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How Much For How Little?

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How Much For How Little?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Many college students leave their dormitory rooms after graduation for small apartments. What to buy and how much to spend are important considerations in planning their "new home." Mary Jean Stoddard, '56, who is doing extension work in Wisconsin, shares an apartment with a friend in Madison. We think you will like some of Mary Jean's ideas for decorating a small apartment on a budget.

WE BEGAN WITH A BALL. It's a big, round, wonderful ball, about 24 inches in diameter. It's made of expanding tissue paper, every piece a different color — and it came from Woolworth's for 69c. It's striped in blue, red, orange, lime green, violet and gold — a wealth of color.

The ball hangs from the living room ceiling, just over the end of the sofa. The sofa is a door, painted navy blue, with wrought iron legs. There's a mattress from home on top. It's covered with a "fitted sheet" of bright blue corduroy. When we have company it doubles as a guest bed. We heap it with pillows — bright blue, tan, gold, bittersweet.

Everything in the apartment has the label "How Cheap?" We moved in just before Christmas expenses hit us. I had just started my job and was still swimming in the "settling" expenses. My roommate, Barbara Heimann, who teaches retarded children in the Madison school system, had just bought a car. I had been taught and I still believe firmly that, when in-

vesting in home furnishings, it is wisest to put in a little more and get something really nice. But at the time there was so much money, no more. I certainly sympathize with anyone who doesn't follow my advice.

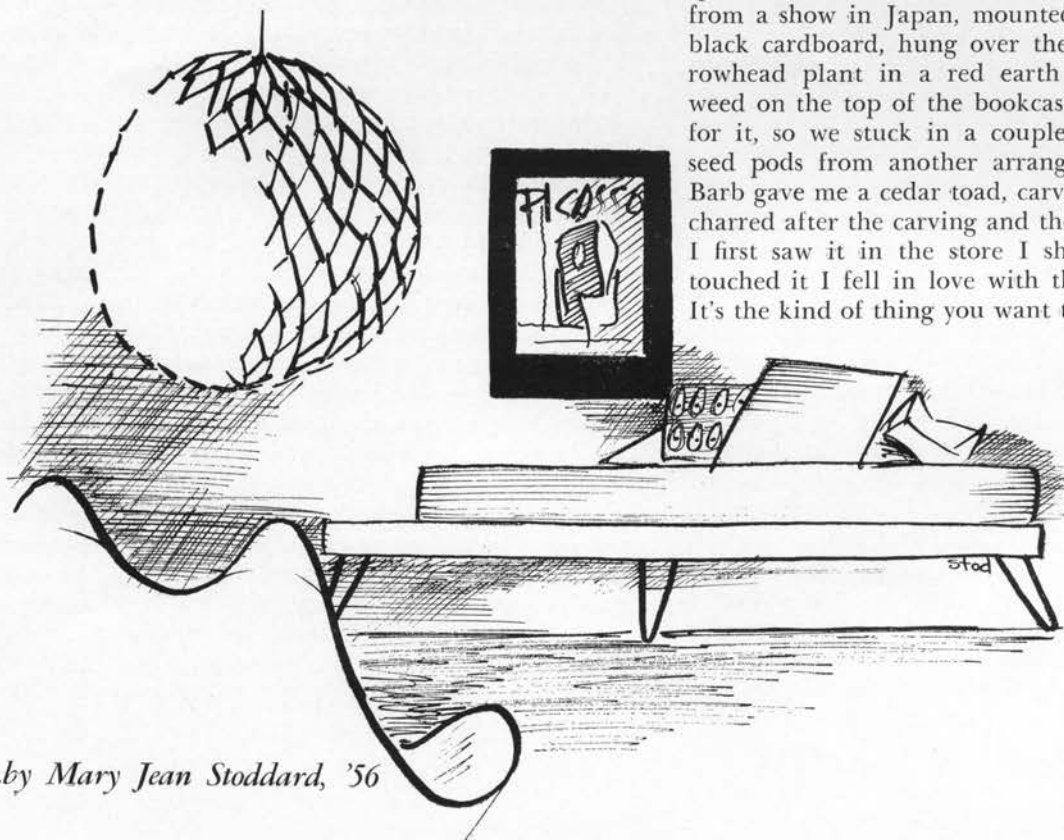
Our living room is 11 feet by 15 feet with a picture window in the long front wall. The walls are light blue, which we turned to grey by using bright colors. We have a grey cotton carpet which we rent from the people who lived here before us.

Windows! We felt we were living in the street! We bought 35 yards of muslin at something like 29 cents a yard. Barbara made pleater-tape drapes which I block printed at home over Christmas vacation. The block was cut in long, stringy rectangles that aren't the same size at the bottom and top and have textures and divisions. I used bright blue, and as I printed, left out some prints and put them in later with bright orange. Open or drawn they're interesting.

Montgomery Ward's sold us 2 wrought iron butterfly chairs in bright yellow. Barbara covered a butter tub with the same corduroy from the sofa. Barbara's father made a long, low coffee table which we keep in front of the window, and Barbara finished boards and built a brick and board book case, the sign of the transient population. Over it hangs the "Scarecrow" oil painting I did under Miss Davis. It's rather orange and blue and it really has a lot of color because I painted it the last day of class to use up all my paints.

All around the living room there are interesting spots of color and accessories. There's a Picasso poster from a show in Japan, mounted on a large piece of black cardboard, hung over the sofa. There's an arrowhead plant in a red earth pot, growing like a weed on the top of the bookcase. We needed a stake for it, so we stuck in a couple of dry Siberian Iris seed pods from another arrangement. At Christmas Barb gave me a cedar toad, carved in Japan. It's been charred after the carving and then sandblasted. When I first saw it in the store I shuddered, but after I touched it I fell in love with the wonderful texture. It's the kind of thing you want to sit and hold. Every-

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—by Mary Jean Stoddard, '56

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one who comes picks it up. Add a couple of the enameled plates I made in Summer Craft Workshop at Gatlinburg and the Rya Rug I did as part of my graduate work. And today we added a Hi-Fi.

That's the living room. It's pretty much "done." I think if anything we might add some cushions for floor-sitting, but there seem to be other things to buy, always! Total expense probably came to \$50, thanks to parental donations. Under 100 would do the whole thing.

There are some other tid-bits around the apartment. The kitchen is almost as big as the living room and very well-equipped. We have a disposal, freezer, 30-inch electric range and cupboard space we never thought we'd fill! But we did! Barbara had all the kitchen equipment, and beds, which we needed so none of our initial expense had to go here. Her parents gave us a table and two chairs which we painted gray. Gray tile, green floor (soft green) and soft yellow walls. There's a sprouting of grape on the table, in a handle-less coffee cup, Army Surplus, a gift from the Ashland County Agent. The curtains again are muslin, a wonderful material! Plans have it to block print them with a crowing chicken that Aaron Borrod, the resident artist, drew on my program at the Rural Artists' Banquet last February. But there was a good piece of wall space between the end of the cupboard and the window wall which bothered me. So I dug out a 24 inch by 30 inch Toulouse Lautrec "Moulin Rouge" poster, a \$30 print I got for a bargain at Morobourgh Book Store in New York. I made a frame of pine, the same size as the poster and tacked the poster on. There's no frame showing, but the poster stands out from the wall, and looks good from the living room, too.

The bedrooms are more conventional. My room was insipid pink, which I am calling "sandstone". I got tan and dark brown "checkered" printed curtains with an overprinting of gold on sale. I carried the brown into the bed spread and into a poster that is all dark brown and white. There was some curtain material left over after I shortened them, so I made a dresser scarf and pillows. I've got a brick and board bookcase and for extra drawer space I'm using MacGregor boxes. Add a table, a small cream dresser and an antique butter tub for a chair.

We like home furnishings that have stories behind them — personal. The main ingredient of our apartment was the imaginative answer to the question, how much can we do for how little?

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